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OO RUEHAG RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR
DE RUEHLM #0055/01 0251354
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 251354Z JAN 10
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1160
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2296
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9318
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7573
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5398
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3733
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5323
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0184
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0844
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4445
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9881
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 7168
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0179
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0026
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000055

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2020

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SUMMONED BY FOREIGN MINISTER

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR PATRICIA A. BUTENIS. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary. The Foreign Minister called in the Ambassador this afternoon to express his concerns about her televised interview which aired on all three MTV news broadcasts the evening of January 14. Foreign Minister Bogollagama also raised the Ambassador's weekend call to the Inspector General of Police regarding the removal of police protection at the Tamil-language daily "Sudar Oli" and its Jaffna-based sister paper "Udayan." Foreign Secretary Jayasinghe had called the Ambassador earlier in the day to express the same points. End Summary.

12. (C) Foreign Minister Bogollagama summoned the Ambassador to the Ministry this afternoon to express his concerns regarding the timing of the Ambassador's interview on MTV. While noting that the interview aired during the formal campaign period, the FM stated that the election platform is not only physical but also electronic, and urged the Ambassador not to become part of the process. The Ambassador responded that she receives lots of domestic and international media requests, and is judicious in those that she accepts. She added that she had done an earlier interview with state media channel Rupavahini, which had determined not to run the interview, citing her answer to a question on IDPs.

13. (C) During the Ambassador's MTV interview, she was asked about the U.S. perspective toward the election, and responded that we were concerned about the escalation in violence and expressed our desire that the poll be free, fair and credible. She called on all candidates to appeal to their supporters to stop the violence. She said that the Election Commissioner's decisions should be enforced and that citizens should be able to exercise their democratic right to vote without fear. In response to a question about U.S. support for the elections, the Ambassador noted the embassy had issued three statements related to the elections and

mentioned that we had given funding to domestic organizations helping with voter registration. When asked about the bilateral relations after the election, the Ambassador said that we still have concerns about human rights, accountability and the importance of reconciliation. When asked, the Ambassador emphatically denied claims widely circulated in the media that we had given money to one side or the other, and repeated that the United States is neutral. FM Bogollagama affirmed that the Ambassador had the right to respond to such charges.

¶4. (C) The Foreign Minister also raised the Ambassador's January 23 call to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to discuss the removal of police protection at the Tamil-language daily "Sudar Oli" and its Jaffna-based sister paper "Udayan." Both papers have been frequent subjects of intimidation, and had appealed to the embassy to intervene to urge the police be reinstated. FM Bogollagama suggested that the Ambassador call the Foreign Ministry first for any assistance. The Ambassador noted that she knows the IGP personally, and added that she had learned the situation was resolved before she had reached the IGP, but knew he was waiting for her call and thus wanted to complete the call.

¶5. (C) Comment. FM Bogollagama told the Ambassador that Foreign Secretary Jayasinghe had briefed him on the Foreign Secretary's earlier call to the Ambassador. Both the Foreign Minister and Foreign Secretary were pleasant and did not belabor the points. It is unusual to have the Foreign Minister and Foreign Secretary cover the same ground, especially on the same day. Such attention may reflect the intensity of uncertainty regarding the results of tomorrow's elections and be intended as a message for the international

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community to keep a low profile in the coming days. End
Comment.
BUTENIS